



NEWS RELEASE

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MSGGA policy does not support split-state status.

HELENA- The Montana Stockgrowers Association stands firm in its opposition to split-state status for brucellosis classification. The organization set this interim policy at the group's mid-year meeting in Lewistown this past June.

"Maintaining Montana's brucellosis free status is critically important to maintain but split-state status is not the answer," MSGGA Executive Vice President Errol Rice said. "Split-state status is a divisive measure that serves as a distraction from the root of the problem—diseased wildlife in the Greater Yellowstone Area—while offering producers no real protection from the spread of the disease. We believe split-state status will be more damaging than protective to the Montana cattle industry. "

MSGGA has huge concerns about the process of applying for split-state status, its implementation, and the effects to the industry.

- Preparing an application for split state status will be costly, complex and a detailed process that relies on the assumption that the next case of brucellosis in the state will occur somewhere near Yellowstone Park.

- It is impossible to determine how many ranches may be impacted and what the associated costs will be without knowing where the proposed boundaries for the Class-A area would be.

- If the state's intent is to pre-establish criteria for a speculative split-state area as any counties adjacent to the Greater Yellowstone Area, some serious contemplation needs to occur as to the magnitude of that sort of undertaking. Carbon, Stillwater, Sweetgrass, Park, Gallatin, Madison, and Beaverhead counties represent 458,000 cattle and calves out of 2,400,000 total in Montana, or roughly 19%. These same counties also represent a total of 2,137 livestock operations out of 12,951 total livestock operations in Montana, or roughly 17%.

- Regardless of the size of the area, the state would need to invest massive resources to be able to establish and maintain the Class-A area. The Department of Livestock would have to hire many additional people to efficiently regulate and enforce movement of cattle between the two areas at the expense of all producers in Montana.

- There is no guarantee that a potential second brucellosis case will be located in these seven counties. A ranch in Glen could contract the disease from local and migratory elk herds or a case could spring up in Jordan. If that happened, all of the state's resources, efforts and expenses will have been wasted.

- Even if USDA approves split-state status, there is no guarantee that other state veterinarians would recognize the two different statuses within the state. These State veterinarians operate independently and are likely to impose the same import requirements on all eligible classes of Montana cattle, regardless of whether they originated from the Class-Free section of the state or from the Class-A section. North Dakota, an important trade state especially for ranchers in Eastern Montana, does not currently recognize split-state status.

- Split-state status serves only to divide the voices of Montana cattle producers resulting in less incentive for the entire industry to work together to eliminate brucellosis.

“The entire state’s brucellosis-free status will always be at risk until we deal with the problem of diseased wildlife in the Greater Yellowstone Area,” Rice said. “The U.S. cattle industry has spent over 70 years and \$3.5 billion dollars in its effort to eradicate brucellosis from cattle. The only way we can ever finish the job is to eliminate the disease and the risk of transmission from wildlife. Ranchers from Sydney and Kalispell should be just as concerned about this problem as producers from Pray,” Rice continued. “No matter what we do, if another case of brucellosis is disclosed in Montana within the next 24 months, regardless of where, it will affect producers across the entire state.”

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The Montana Stockgrowers Association, a non-profit organization representing nearly 2,500 members, strives to serve, protect and advance the economic, political, environmental and cultural interests of cattle producers, the largest sector of Montana’s number one industry – agriculture.